

INFANTRY LETTERS



FOR SAFETY'S SAKE

Captain Bryan G. Watson's article "Combat Safety" (INFANTRY, September-October 1987, page 40) is interesting, but his interpretations do not reflect the current trend in safety thought. He does not seem to have heard of tactical risk management--the current safety application that gives a commander and his staff a systematic approach to reducing or eliminating training hazards.

Under this approach, the unit safety officer identifies potential hazards during the planning phase of operations and provides the commander with ways by which identified hazards may be eliminated or reduced. The commander, not the safety officer, makes the final "GO or NO GO" decision based on these recommendations. In other words, the commander accepts the risk level for the training.

Captain Watson refers to so many "restrictive" safety measures that were enforced during an exercise. I must point out that, from my experience, many installations and posts have placed outdated and outmoded safety restrictions in their regulations and SOPs and that commanders are given little latitude in reducing unnecessary restrictions. This is not the fault of the commander or the safety officer but "cautiousness" on the part of the post or installation commanders.

I agree with Captain Watson that live fire exercises must be as tactically realistic as possible in order to get maximum training benefits for the time and resources expended. I have found, however, that many units do not properly prepare their troops for live fire environments during blank fire exercises. We do not enforce "live fire safety rules" diligently during these exercises; for example, clearing stoppages and jams in individual and

crew-served weapons (troops point their weapons in any direction when clearing them during a live fire exercise the same as they do when using blanks). Therefore, commanders are safety smart to place heavier restrictions on units that have not demonstrated during blank fire exercises the safety awareness required to operate in a free play live fire exercise. During combined arms training, this unevenness in safety preparedness looms as an even more critical consideration for the overall commander.

And finally, I disagree that we need more safety SOPs in writing--Captain Watson complains that we have too many and then recommends that we develop more! What we need to do is ensure that unit safety SOPs are written completely and concisely (eliminating the "eye wash" found in many SOPs to please an inspecting officer); that safety SOPs be disseminated widely within the unit, at least down to the NCO level; and that we use the safety annex to OPORDs/OPLANs to define the commander's safety parameters for an exercise or a mission. We need *better* safety SOPs and annexes, not *more* SOPs!

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BATTLE DRESS SOP

I am glad Captain Gregory Banner commented on my battledress SOP article in the September-October 1987 issue of INFANTRY (pages 18-19). His letter (January-February 1988, pages 3-4) provided an interesting contrast of different approaches to solving the same problem--getting

soldiers to wear their equipment to fit their own needs rather than someone else's perceptions or misconceptions of them.

Our opinions probably reflect different frames of reference and experience with soldiers, although it would be an oversimplification and an unfair generalization to say that elite troops are self energizing and directing and that line soldiers are not as well motivated. Certainly the capabilities of the men, the size of the units, and the type of missions involved require differing techniques for promoting physical welfare and the ability to fight.

Captain Banner's criticism leads me to believe that I did not adequately develop my article's main point. My thesis was that most units are required to have a battledress SOP and that the commander should work hard to make sure it actually serves the needs of his men in combat conditions. If he does not, or if he leaves its development up to someone else at a higher headquarters (whose primary concern is reaching his sunglasses or cigarettes in his ammunition pouch while riding in his jeep), the unit will end up with an SOP that does not deliver its potential benefits but handicaps the soldiers instead.

We have to be careful about letting individual soldiers configure their equipment to suit themselves. Many of them don't have the experience to recognize their own self-interest or the wisdom to act upon it. They may need a little guidance from those who have learned the same lessons earlier. If the average soldier did what he knew was in his best interest, the Army would probably have, for example, 80 percent fewer accidents caused by predictable human factors.

Anyone who has been a specialist fourth class for a while only has to

keep his eyes open to see steel helmets cut with a torch into lightweight framework skeletons to support camouflage helmet covers. It is not unknown for a soldier to fill his canteen with Koolaid or M & M candies, or to cut a plastic canteen in half to hold a small camera or other items that are more important to him than water. Some soldiers have even pulled the springs and followers out of their magazines and loaded them with Hershey bars. Unless the magazines are pulled out and inspected, who can tell by looking at them upside down in an ammo pouch?

After 16 years in the mechanized infantry as an NCO and a company grade officer, I have learned to trust everyone, but to *check*. Time may have caused me to become suspicious or authoritative, but I am not embarrassed by the results. All it took was a couple of heat injuries and a few problems with feet during an ARTEP to cause me to implement company-wide enforced drinking and mandatory foot inspections in squad formations. It may have seemed theatrical, but it got the message across and eliminated those two problems for that field training exercise and future ones as well.

Another valuable benefit of a unit battledress SOP that I failed to mention is that, since everyone wears it the same way, it allows rapid common usage of another soldier's equipment. Its use may be something for the soldier himself in the case of a first aid bandage needed in a hurry, or for another soldier, getting ammunition off a casualty in the dark. Combat is not the time and place to try and figure out where a casualty liked to carry his first aid bandage, or that he had left it off altogether.

A good SOP would be self-policing because soldiers would have a legitimate interest in and reason for demanding that other small unit members carry their share of the load and take care of themselves and their equipment. An SOP is nothing more than acquired group knowledge converted into institutionalized unit practice.

Actually, a soldier rigged out the way I have described in my article, and practiced in my rifle company, will not look very soldierly at all—more like a penguin with a bustle—but he will be less likely to get hung up crawling on the ground or shot while rolling over to fumble with his ammo pouch. I took it for granted that left-handed firers would follow the common practice of reversing their gear, but that reflects the oversight of a right-handed writer.

Like most things, of course, the balance lies in the middle between anarchistic self-determination and didactic despotism. That middle ground is a participative battledress SOP designed by both the soldiers and their chain of command to fit their collective needs. The "why" should always drive the "what." If it doesn't, then something else is wrong with the unit besides its SOP.

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EXCITING CPXs

Captain Anthony R. Garrett's article "CPX Planning for A Battalion Staff" (INFANTRY, March-April 1988, pages 30-31) brought back memories of some exciting CPXs with the 11th Air Assault Division at Fort Benning in the early 1960s.

The one I learned the most on the fastest was when the control staff destroyed the brigade command post (CP) and designated our battalion commander as the new brigade commander. A curtain was hung across the middle of the GP medium tent and I became a brigade S-2. One side of the curtain held the primary battalion staff (minus the XO) as brigade staff and the other side held the XO (as the new battalion commander) with the NCOs becoming the battalion staff.

This sounds like SOP, but when you consider the further adjustments that had to be made to conduct continuous 24-hour operations, it was quite a big deal. Then there were two other bat-

talion headquarters out there that were suddenly reporting to us and executing our generated orders.

It was excellent training. The old adage "Be prepared to assume the duties two levels above your own" was brought home.

Evidently, those of us on that temporary brigade staff did O.K., because a short two years later we were redesignated the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) and we were all on brigade staffs enroute to An Khe, South Vietnam.

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TOW POSITION

I am writing in response to Captain J. Karl Clark's Swap Shop item on dismounted TOW positions (INFANTRY, March-April 1988, page 39).

It appears to me no small wonder that the TOW position pictured in the item was successful at the National Training Center, since MILES is normally the only weapon system employed against player units there. The position pictured was obviously not designed to stop bullets! Considering such things as artillery, direct fire, and weapon concussion, this TOW position could add to the casualty rate.

Since direct fire weapons are such a great threat on the battlefield, the stones used as a frontal parapet are dangerous. First, rocks don't support each other the way sandbags do, and the parapet could collapse when struck by bullets. Secondly, rocks tend to shatter and splinter when struck by high-velocity projectiles resulting in additional casualties even when soldiers are missed by the bullets. Thirdly, when rocks are used, gaps are left, as in Captain Clark's pictures, and projectiles have a way of finding gaps.

An additional factor is the instability of the U-bars being used to support the overhead cover. Even though fighting positions aren't normally designed to withstand direct artillery hits, a position with only four support

points (the legs of the U-bars)--when encountering near misses, or close airbursts, or surviving the effects of cumulative weapon-firing concussion--can become unstable, similar to jumping on your dinner table with your guests underneath, with predictable results.

Further, and this is speculation, it appears from the photographs that the nine inches necessary for missile clearance is not present in the position. Along with this is the method of above-ground construction. The position presents a very high silhouette and is susceptible to all the ensuing dangers (such as exposed gunners or early enemy observation).

Nevertheless, the suggestion to use TOW caps is an excellent one. As Captain Clark stated, as well as in my own experience, the use of TOW caps saves soldier time, reduces work load, allows soldiers to be more rested and therefore more able to accomplish their missions. In addition, Captain Clark's use of camouflage nets is good, although I would stretch the net out a bit on the sides to blend with the terrain and break up the contour.

Building on Captain Clark's ideas, I propose a few recommendations for improvement:

First, use sandbags instead of rocks and stones. The number would vary since positions are sited on the basis of METT-T. Sandbags can also be filled in assembly areas and carried in vehicles. When emplacing a position, use the sandbags to provide frontal cover of 24 to 36 inches, allowing, of course, at least nine inches for missile fin extension. Also, use sandbags for side parapets of appropriate width and high enough to be flush with the top of the U-bars. If the U-bars are stable, the horizontal bars will easily support the weight of the TOW cap. This technique provides multiple support points, reinforces the various construction materials, and eliminates the use of those dangerous rocks.

I also recommend digging the weapon into the ground. The time will be well spent. (Rommel's *Infantry Attacks* supports this point.) Reducing the silhouette by

even half a foot may make a great difference when the enemy is trying to acquire targets. Two feet would be superb.

When digging in, allow for free traverse of the weapon throughout its field of fire, and don't forget the nine inches of ground clearance, not to mention back-blast area. (From what I have been told, a general rule of thumb is to make the rear openings as large as those in front.) Don't spare the sandbags, and don't let your soldiers become casualties by being exposed. If you don't have sandbags, packed earth, earth-filled ammunition boxes (or MRE boxes), and terrain masking are possible solutions.

Above all, remember that the intent of a fighting position is to allow a soldier to continue engaging the enemy with real bullets while being fired upon by an enemy using real bullets, not laser beams.

Finally, as Captain Clark says, the key to success is using battle drill and load plans to facilitate employment. On the whole, I agree with his premise on the use of TOW caps.

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KILLING ARMOR

The article "Killing Armor in the Middle Ground," by Major Richard D. McCreight (INFANTRY, March-April 1988, pages 14-16) points out a serious deficiency that has existed for decades in the Army.

A short-term solution might be a system based on the Soviet RPG design. We could use improved propellant to allow for longer range or larger warhead, coupled with a simple optical rangefinder carried by the crew chief, assistant gunner, or ammunition bearer to give the firer a more accurate means of ranging a target. A three-man crew would allow for as many as a dozen rounds to be carried by the team, with the option of having a second launcher available as well as addi-

tional rounds carried within the platoon by other members.

Obviously, this is not the preferred weapon to use against the most modern reactive or improved armor, but it would still allow for mobility kills on the heaviest armor and the complete destruction of APCs, bunkers, and other lightly protected targets.

If the development of new propellants allowed for a seven-kilogram rocket to burn its entire motor while in the launcher tube (as with the LAW), and if launch velocity reached about 1,600 meters per second, then we might consider a two-rocket package on a modified M202A1 flame weapon launcher. The rocket would have a depleted uranium nose in front of a 100-gram charge of C-4 explosive detonated by a millisecond delay impact fuze. This gives multiple shots, the same trigger pull each time, increased range, dual-purpose rounds, and an organic but rudimentary ADA capability at the platoon level. But this is a future possibility; the RPG adaptation is available now.

For further information, check with the Israelis; they are the only Western army that issues the RPG at squad level.

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FOOT MOVEMENTS

The EIB road march is a counter-productive training standard. There. I said it and I'm glad. I realize that is a bit like being against motherhood and apple pie, but I have lived in the shadow of its destructiveness for too long. The personal load varies (sometimes with a full ruck, sometimes in guard mount LBE with entrenching tool, depending upon what year), and the purpose of the whole thing is obscure.

Someone needs to ask the big question: What is the purpose of the training standard of 12 miles in three hours or less? Do we really expect to

move units on foot this fast? Carrying all their ammunition, night vision devices, field phones, radios, wire, and all the rest? I submit that this is not a realistic option, but I am not alone in this opinion. The Canadian officer John English, in his book *On Infantry* (page 69), describes the pre-World War II training of the *Wehrmacht* (an organization not exactly known for its lax training standards):

Many German units were capable of astonishing feats in this area, and 30 miles a day for several days on end appears to have been fairly common training practice. A good rate for a longer march was considered to be an impressive four to five kilometers an hour. Equally important, however, was that more than six kilometers was considered impossible. The Germans were not afraid to admit to human limitations.

Six kilometers (3.72 miles) per hour was considered impossible, but on the EIB road march we are asking troops to move 19.31 kilometers in three hours at the most (if you come in at three hours and one minute, you are a NO GO).

Some of you are no doubt thinking, "Now, wait a minute! The EIB road march is a standard of physical toughness; a way of finding some of those who are a cut above in order to determine who gets a competitive award." This is true, in fact. And if it were clearly discerned by everyone, there would be no problem. Unfortunately, this is not the case.

For very young soldiers and leaders, the EIB is the only marching standard they know. It does not help that the training requirement for road marches is also 12 miles. "Twelve miles? Oh yeah. EIB, three hours, no sweat; pick it up, platoon sergeant."

We do well only what we practice, and too often road marching in the U.S. Army consists of hurtling your troops down a tank trail at unrealistic speeds without a thought to proper road march planning.

Nor is the simple road march the end of our problem. Many commanders will say, "Yeah, most other people don't do road marches well, but I have

breaks every hour, plan my route, make march tables, have foot checks, inspect personal loads, make provisions to evacuate and treat injured soldiers," and generally describe a textbook road march as prescribed in FM 21-18.

These are the same people who have their units cross the LD on an 18-kilometer foot movement over brutal, rocky, broken terrain to attack an enemy position and walk for six hours straight with no breaks at all!

It's enough to make you weep. Their troops are just staggering. Some of them have fallen out. Command and control has gone completely to hell. Squad leaders don't know where all their people are. The lightly loaded move toward the front. The Dragon gunners and other heavily loaded soldiers fall to the rear. The radio telephone operators struggle trying to keep up with a lightly loaded commander or platoon leader and curse the day they were born. The whole company is a *mob* of 100 men who have a slim and none chance of reacting to sudden enemy contact. When there is a halt (usually initiated by the discovery of a break in contact) troops just flop down and pant with no thought of tactical security. Junior leaders are usually as fried as their troops.

All of this comes from the one training standard for foot movement that every infantryman can quote chapter and verse—the EIB road march.

So what's to be done? As leaders we need to start educating ourselves and our subordinates on road marching. Our eyes should be on three basic factors:

- Get to where you're going on time.
- Have troops that are rested and organized enough to do something when you get there.
- Maintain reasonable tactical security while you're moving and at periodic halts.

The standards for an administrative foot movement are clearly laid out in FM 21-18, and we must ensure that all our subordinate leaders know and adhere to them— not only to preserve

troop strength and health but so that higher leaders can use standard planning factors for foot movement with a relative certainty of their being adhered to.

In addition, security measures must be planned for at all times. Even though a movement may be from one point to another behind the FLOT, this does not mean that no security measures need to be taken. In an attack situation the commander should designate places along his axis of advance for security halts. These places should offer cover and concealment and should be defensible for a short period of time. At these halts, junior leaders should count noses and check loads, and crew-served weapons and antitank systems should be placed out for security. A halt of 15 to 20 minutes will allow a unit to rest and reorganize before continuing.

It is also important in a tactical foot movement across the LD to an assault position for a commander to have the courage to say, "Can't get there from here," if his commander tries to put his dismount point too far back. Any terrain analysis must include an estimate of the difficulty of the ground to be traversed. If it is a night movement, the percentage of illumination is another key planning factor.

As for the EIB road march, either make it a 12-mile run in two hours in PT uniform or a 25-mile movement in nine hours in full combat load. The one is clearly not a road march standard; the other is a tough but realistic one.

In closing, I can only say that the U.S. Army has a great foot marching heritage. We are the descendants of Sherman's march and Stonewall Jackson's foot cavalry. That these were two great foot marching armies was due to the concern and professionalism of their leadership, not their ability to run 12 miles in three hours.

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